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Single intelligence chief favored by Senate panel

Washington (NYT)—The Senate Intelligence Committee, after a year of activity that has been almost as secretive as the agencies it monitors, is considering concentrating the authority for the nation's entire intelligence in a single office under a "director of national intelligence."

In the past, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency also has carried the title of "director of central intelligence" but has lacked meaningful control over large segments of the intelligence community, particularly the National Security Agency and other agencies housed within the Department of Defense.

Senior senators on the committee, which is ready to go public with a series of hearings, recommendations, bills and reports that could reshape the intelligence community and set the pattern of congressional oversight for years to come, said that the present thinking of the committee was that the new "director of national intelligence" should have control of the National Security Agency and its worldwide communications intercept and code-breaking activities.

"We'd have to give him the tools he'd need to run the entire operation, and that includes budget authority" and the power to set priorities, said Senator Walter D. Huddleston (D., Ky.). "We can't place the responsibility on him without giving him the authority."

In the months ahead, the committee plans to hold hearings on secrecy and espionage laws, report on the quality of intelligence-gathering about China and the Soviet Union, draft a new legislative charter for the CIA and reveal a lump-sum figure of the cost of intelligence.

"We are going to propose an in-depth and massive restructuring of our laws," Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D., Hawaii), the committee chairman, said recently. "Unfortunately, most of our work is classified and can't be discussed publicly."

The oversight committee, created after a select committee headed by Senator Frank Church (D., Idaho) documented scores of improper and illegal acts by the nation's intelligence community, will mark its first anniversary Thursday with a report to the Senate on the activities of its first year.